

Murphy predicts continuity in peace talks

By Berta Gomez
USIA Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — The Mideast peace process that began a year ago in Madrid has generated sufficient momentum to continue moving forward regardless of whatever changes are made in U.S. foreign policy leadership, says Richard Murphy.

Although the talks will eventually need "high-level" attention from the United States, they have the "life" and "vitality" to survive a period of relaxed U.S. mediation following the presidential elections, Mr. Murphy said in an Oct. 29 satellite interview with "Al Jazeera" newspaper in Riyadh.

Mr. Murphy's 34 years of service to the U.S. government began during the Eisenhower era and ended just after the Reagan presidency. He is currently senior fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The parties to the bilateral peace talks — Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and a delegation of Palestinians — suspended their negotiations for the U.S. elections, with plans to resume on Nov. 9.

Mr. Murphy, that plan is encouraging, because it reveals a strong level of commitment among the negotiators. "They are, in effect, saying: 'It does not matter to us who is elected president of the United States. We, the negotiating parties, wish to continue discussing the issues and trying to reach a solution,'" Mr. Murphy said.

He predicted that Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, a Democrat, would defeat Republican George Bush in Tuesday's election, but stressed that U.S. foreign policy will remain stable — whichever party runs the White House for the next four years.

For persons interested in the Middle East — particularly the peace process — "the important election of 1992... was the election in Israel last June that brought Yitzhak Rabin to the prime ministry," he declared.

The Israeli Labour Party's return to power "has created opportunities for negotiations which simply did not exist before," Mr. Murphy explained. Mr. Rabin's election "means that everyone can approach the issues, (and look) for possible compromises which would have been inconceivable with the former leadership in Israel."

Mr. Murphy noted that if Mr. Clinton is elected, he and his foreign policy team will have "perhaps several weeks" to examine the Arab-Israeli negotiations and to decide on their own future policy.

"When (Clinton) finally sits down to examine the complexities of the Arab-Israeli peace process... he will see it as having been a continuation, and a very successful chapter, in American efforts to advance the Arab-Israeli peace process. And I believe that he will want to continue that... and build on what has been accomplished," Mr. Murphy said.

Asked if former Secretary of State James Baker might travel to the Middle East in the period between the election and the January inauguration, Mr. Murphy said that Mr. Baker would probably consider taking such a trip "if it would help accomplish another step" in the peace process. Mr. Baker "has been very proud" of his work as secretary of state, and particularly of his efforts to bring about peace in the Middle East, Mr. Murphy said.

President Bush has indicated that if he wins reelection, Mr. Baker will not return to the State Department, and will assume responsibility for domestic issues in the White House.

In general, Mr. Murphy downplayed the prospects for a major peace breakthrough in the very near future. With or without Baker's help, "there is no possibility, in my opinion, of reaching... a final solution in the coming three months," he said.

But he emphasized that steady progress is well within reach. "I think there is a good possibility... perhaps not in the next three months but soon thereafter — for an interim agreement with the Palestinians and agreements with the Syrians, Jordanians and the Lebanese," Mr. Murphy said.

Despite worries among many Arabs that Israel will aim for separate agreements with one or two of its negotiating partners — as opposed to a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, Mr. Murphy suggested that the best policy is to "stay calm and keep an open mind."

Negotiators should avoid blocking government as long as they have an assurance that at the end of the day the interests of all the parties have to be taken into account," he said.

Mr. Murphy also dismissed the suggestion that a Democratic administration would be unable to act as an impartial mediator to the peace talks. "Mr. Clinton is no less interested than President Bush in helping bring about a lasting peace in the Middle East," he said. "And by definition, a mediator who takes sides is not a mediator."

Although Mr. Clinton and his running mate, Senator Al Gore, have criticized President Bush for his pre-war friendship towards Iraq and for placing conditions on U.S. housing loan guarantees for Israel, they have expressed little discomfit with other aspects of U.S. policy, Mr. Murphy pointed out.

"I believe there is no question that a Democratic administration will wish to reinforce and develop the closest of ties with the states of the (Gulf Cooperation Council)... and that there will be a very close dialogue continuing between Washington and those capitals," he said.

The post-election period will also see continued U.S. support for the United Nations embargo against Iraq, a policy that is "widely supported by Americans" and by both major political parties, Mr. Murphy said.

Americans pick a president

(Continued from page 1)

hoped only to keep Democrats from padding their 57-43 Senate margin.

In 14 states voters considered initiatives to limit the number of terms for elected officials. The bet was all 14 would pass. Less certain were the fates of dozens of other ballot initiatives, from Oregon's anti gay-rights measure to California's proposal to legalize assisted suicide, to Washington, D.C.'s proposal for a death penalty.

When the last lever is pulled — polls in Alaska were to close 0600 GMT Wednesday — the curtain will be drawn on a cantankerous campaign year that took confounding turns.

Conservative commentator Pat Buchanan stung Mr. Bush during the race for the Republican presidential nomination, usually a shoe-in for the incumbent. Mr. Buchanan ran ads reminding voters of Mr. Bush's broken "Read my lips: No new taxes" promise. Mr. Buchanan's 37 per cent was

Arafat appeals for Syrian help

(Continued from page 1)

government, but to changes noted in informal talks outside the main negotiating room.

In the informal discussions, Israeli delegates had for example agreed to discuss land and water, although these changes had not been translated into negotiating positions in the formal talks, she said.

changes that can be discerned," she said in a speech to the World Affairs Council of Northern California, a non-partisan educational organization.

She said she was not referring just to the recent change of Israeli

Iraqi Kurds bitter at Turkish incursion

ANKARA (R) — An Iraqi Kurdish official voiced dismay Monday at Turkey's big military incursion into northern Iraq in pursuit of separatist Turkish Kurds.

"I don't know why they (Turks) are taking this action," Serchil Qazzaz, Ankara representative of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), told Reuters. "It's a serious misunderstanding."

Mr. Qazzaz said Iraqi Kurds had told Turkey the rebels had agreed to quit the border region, disarm and conduct a political struggle, but Ankara had turned down the offer saying they must surrender to Turkish forces.

Turkey has sent about 20,000 troops backed by tanks, planes and helicopter gunships into northern Iraq to destroy bases of an estimated 8,000 Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) guerrillas.

Mr. Qazzaz said the PKK had already agreed to surrender to Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces which launched their own attack against the Marxist group on Oct. 4 to drive it from the region.

"The PKK has surrendered. Why should fighting go on?" he asked. "They have accepted all our terms."

Officials said Thursday troops had killed over 400 PKK fighters. On Sunday state-run television said more than 1,000 had been killed in the capture of a PKK base at Haftanin.

Anatolia news agency said five PKK fighters and one Turkish soldier had been killed Monday

Bush defeat decreed by divine power — Iraqi paper

BAGHDAD (R) — God will ensure George Bush is crushed at the polls Tuesday and consign him to dustbin of history, an official Iraqi newspaper said.

"Bush is finished, the punishment of God is not like that of a human being upon a criminal of such nature... he (Bush) is going to the dustbin of history... cursed by everybody until doomsday," the government newspaper Al Jumhuriyah said.

Iraqis are closely watching the U.S. elections and they have taken President Bush's downfall as pre-ordained.

Mr. Bush is reviled in Iraq for leading the multi-national coalition that ejected Iraqi troops from Kuwait and for spearheading painful U.N. trade sanctions against Baghdad.

Other enemies of Iraq can also expect to feel the hand of God, Al Jumhuriyah said.

"Everyone who conspired against Iraq is moving towards a black end, to the hell of oblivion, ruin of present and future," it said.

"The cancer from which

Canada likely to deport author Irving to Britain

NIAGARA FALLS, Ontario (AP) — A British author who denies that six million Jews died in the Holocaust will be deported to Britain if authorities in the United States refuse to accept him, an immigration department official said Monday.

An immigration hearing for author David Irving was adjourned until Wednesday morning, said the official, Milt Best.

"He asked for the adjournment so he could produce evidence he was out of the country and returned," Mr. Best said from his office in Toronto.

Mr. Irving will continue to be held in jail, where he spent Sunday night after being turned back at the border by U.S. authorities.

He had been ordered out of Canada by Sunday night.

Mr. Irving, the author of a biography of Adolf Hitler and other Nazis, had attempted to drive into New York State after speaking to several hundred supporters at a Toronto hotel.

He was arrested last Wednesday in Victoria at a dinner of a group that calls itself the Canadian Free Speech League. The visit was part of a cross-country speaking tour. He was ordered out of the country Friday and given 48 hours to comply.

The order was based on a conviction last year in a German court for making statements "insulting to the memory of the dead."

Under federal immigration laws Mr. Irving, 56, can be deported to the United States because he entered Canada via the United States, Mr. Best said.

But if the Americans continue to deny him entry, Canadian taxpayers will pick up the tab to send him back to Britain, where he is a citizen, Mr. Best said.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. official denies Iraq papers show

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. Agriculture Secretary Madigan denied documents about Iraqi loan guarantees shredded, but a key member of the House of Representatives called Monday for further investigation. Mr. Madigan responded to allegations by Representative Henry Gonzalez, man of the House Banking Committee, that Agriculture and Conservation Service (ASCS) employees shredded documents about Agriculture Department loan guarantees to buy American farm commodities. "To the best of our knowledge there is absolutely no foundation for the allegation," Mr. Madigan said. "The episode demonstrates the need for an independent counsel who could insure that all records are kept and investigated freely." Mr. Gonzalez also said he had information from the Central Intelligence Agency that it had found (Mr. Madigan's) letter inconclusive. "Mr. Gonzalez's statement," "The episode demonstrates the need for an independent counsel who could insure that all records are kept and investigated freely." Mr. Gonzalez also said he had information from the Central Intelligence Agency that it had found (Mr. Madigan's) letter inconclusive.

Djibouti denies deploying troops against

PARIS (R) — The government of Djibouti has denied opposition accusation that President Hassan Gouled-Aprel ordered his troops to seek a military solution to an 11 conflict in the tiny Horn of Africa state. The parties opposition made the claim in a statement sent to French ahead of a visit by Mr. Gouled to Paris Tuesday, say government spokesmen. Mr. Gouled is expected to arrive in Paris on Tuesday. Mr. Gouled's efforts to rehabilitate war-damaged conflict in the former French colony began in late 1991 when the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy launched an offensive, capturing large areas of the southwest of the state. The FRUD, led by Afar tribes, which along with the Issa tribe makes up about half the population. The conflict has shattered a cease-fire achieved with the help of France and partly French troops. Mr. Gouled, due to meet French President Mitterrand shortly after arriving Tuesday for a two-day visit, made some concessions including agreeing to a new constitution which limits his powers and was approved in a referendum September. Opposition parties have also been legalizing parliamentary opposition said in its statement that the government had launched hostilities after acquiring a new stock of ammunition. It appealed to France not to proceed with payments and said that compensation funds from Fia financial losses during last year's Gulf war served to reinvigorate government's war-like stance.

Britain condemns increase in Rushdie re

LONDON (AP) — The British government on Monday condemned the decision by an Iranian religious foundation to reward for the death of British author Salman Rushdie. An Office spokesman said it was "totally unacceptable" — infringement of his (Rushdie's) human rights. The foundation already a monstrosity and its increase makes it even more so. The Khorshid 15 Foundation offered \$2 million for Mr. Rushdie's killing after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a death on Feb. 14, 1989 against the author for allegedly blasphemous in his novel "The Satanic Verses." In a statement published Tehran newspaper Monday, the foundation said it was rewarded because of a public appearance Mr. Rushdie made in which he asked Germany to intercede with Iran in the death sentence. It did not stipulate how much it had for the reward. Mr. Rushdie, 45, went into hiding under protection after Ayatollah Khomeini's edict and has made rare, unannounced public appearances. Carmel Bedford, woman for the International Committee for the Defence of Rushdie, called the foundation's decision an act of "international terrorism which breaks all the international conventions party to. It is outrageous that a British citizen cannot go to European country without provoking such a move."

SLA militiamen torch olive groves

BEIRUT (AP) — A group of Israeli-backed militiamen in north of the so-called "security zone" in South Lebanon and set fire to olive groves suspected of harbouring opponents. Security sources said about 10,000 square metres were torched around the village of Majdal Zoun, less than 10 kilometres north of Israel's self-security zone. Nine militiamen of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) were involved in the attack, the sources, insisting on anonymity. They withdrew a zone after an hour-long search under the cover of heavy gunfire, the sources said. Israeli warplanes also flew low over the area to detect guerrilla movements. Pro-Iranian guerrillas Hizbollah have often used the groves as a launching pad for attacks on the 1,100-square-kilometre zone which Israel set up to guard against guerrilla infiltrations into northern Israel. The included five Israeli soldiers killed in a bomb explosion off by Hizbollah guerrillas. Hizbollah has vowed not to let arms until Israel quits the zone. Despite the year-old Mideast peace talks in Washington, violence in South Lebanon continued. Both Iran and Hizbollah are opposed to the talks. They have vowed to wreck them. Monday's operation coincided with a first meeting in Beirut of the new cabinet under Prime Rafik Hariri. Mr. Hariri, a 49-year-old, self-made businessman formed his new 30-member cabinet Saturday and said liberal south was one of his priorities. "Our government," he symbolizes a new era of stability, tranquility and prosperity. Mr. Hariri, a native of the southern port city of Sidon.

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JORDAN TELEVISION		Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Tel. 77111-19		Anglican Church Tel. 630851	
PROGRAMME TWO		Armenian Church Tel. 628543	
18:00	Documentary	Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 771331	
18:15	News in French	St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
18:30	De Cinq	Armenian International Church Tel. 685326	
18:45	News in Arabic	Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295	
19:00	Saved by the Bell	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 828264, 654932	
21:10	Cluedo	Church of the Nazareth Tel. 675091	
22:30	News in English		
23:30	The Court Breakout		
PRAYER TIMES		WEATHER	
04:31	Fajr	Unstable weather conditions will continue to affect the Kingdom. Therefore, it will be sunny and partly cloudy, with a chance for scattered showers of rain. Winds will be easterly moderate to fresh. In Amman, winds will be southerly fresh and seas rough.	
05:47	(Sunrise) Dhuha	Bullentin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
11:19	Dhuha		
14:22	Asr		
16:40	Maghrib		
18:08	Isha		
CHURCHES			
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedeh. Tel. 810740		Amman Min/Max. temp. 15/26	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 637785		Aqaba 20/23	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590		Djorah 14/28	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623785		Jordan Valley 21/32	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757			
Terzanta Church Tel. 622366			

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	EMERGENCIES
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	Food Control Centre 637111
Dr. Walid Al Masri 675480	Fire Brigade 637111
Dr. Abbas Al Kaka 854446	Civil Defence Department 661111
Dr. Mubkles Halse 819220	Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Dr. Bahja Badr 869362	Rescue 199
Firas pharmacy 661912	Police 192, 621111, 637777
Ferdous pharmacy 778336	Fire Brigade 891328
Al Asma pharmacy 637055	Blood Bank 775121
Natrouk pharmacy 636772	Highway Police 843402
Al Salam pharmacy 636730	Public Security Department 630321
Yacoub pharmacy 644945	Hotel Complaints 605800
Shuqran pharmacy 637660	Water and Sewerage 661176
Natrouk pharmacy 623672	Complaints 897467
Najib pharmacy 847632	Amman Municipality 787111
	Complaints (directory assistance) 121
	Overseas Calls 010230
	Repairs 623101
IRBID:	Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Dr. Amin Abu Ede 244486	Jordan Television 773111
Al Shams pharmacy 278825	Radio Jordan 774111
	Water Authority 660100
ZARQA:	Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Dr. Abdul Karim Khashashoch 983023	Electric Power Company 636381
Ramzi pharmacy 995119	

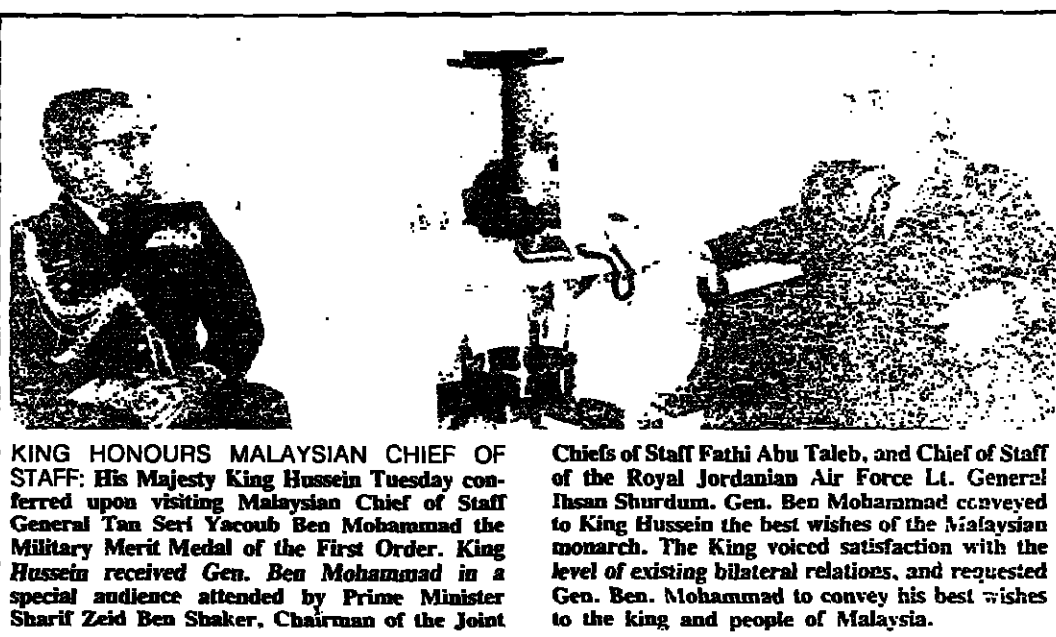
Other Flights (Terminal 2)		MARKET PRICES	
05:05	Dubai (AZ)	Apples (red)	11.20
07:15	Karachi (PI)	Apples (green)	12.00
09:35	Cairo (MS)	Carrots	13.00
10:35	Jeddah (SU)	Cucumbers (large)	
10:35	Sanaa (YV)	Cucumbers (small)	
12:00	Damascus (PI)	Eggplants	
18:10	Paris, Damascus (AF)	Garlic	
18:30	Vienna, Larnaca (AU)	Lemon	
19:35	Beirut (ME)	Marrow (large)	
		Marrow (small)	
		Onion (green)	
		Onion (dry)	
		Pepper (hot)	
		Pepper (sweet)	
		Potatoes	
		Tomatoes	
		Fig	
		Grape	
		Black Grapes	
		Green Grapes	
		Dates	
		Pistachios	
		Spices	
DEPARTURES			
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)			
07:00	Aqaba (RJ)		
07:00	Tripoli, Cambrania (RJ)		
11:00	Beirut, London (RJ)		
11:00	Rome (RJ)		
11:00	Istanbul (RJ)		
13:30	Amsterdam, New York (RJ)		
19:45	Colombo (RJ)		
20:00	Aqaba, Cairo (RJ)		
20:30	Riyadh (RJ)		
20:30	New Delhi (RJ)		
20:30	Damascus (RJ)		
21:30	Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)		
22:45	Sanaa (RJ)		
Other Flights (Terminal 2)			
06:25	Rome (RJ)		
08:00	Damascus (PI)		
08:15	Beirut (ME)		
10:25	Cairo (MS)		

مَكْزَا مِنَ الْأَصْلِ

Iraq papers Cabinet approves trade agreement with OIC

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet has approved a trade agreement with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on the trade of agricultural products. The agreement, which was signed in Rome, provides for the exchange of goods and services between the two organizations. The Cabinet also decided to allocate JD 300,000 to start work on the construction of the premises of the National Centre for Agricultural Research and Transfer of Technology. It further agreed on a request by the Luxembourg-based European Investment Bank (EIB) to send a Jordanian delegation to Luxembourg to hold talks on special funding agreements, to improve King Abdullah Canal in the Jordan valley, increase the capacity of Kafra Dam and construct the remaining part of the new Amman-Aqaba road.

The Cabinet also decided to form a Jordanian delegation to hold talks with German officials in Bonn on Nov. 11 for assistance to help Jordan finance water, irrigation and educational projects.



KING HONOURS MALAYSIAN CHIEF OF STAFF: His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday conferred upon visiting Malaysian Chief of Staff General Tan Sri Yacob Ben Mohammad the Military Merit Medal of the First Order. King Hussein received Gen. Ben Mohammad in a special audience attended by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chairman of the Joint

Mitterrand to come with 'ideas' for peace, claims ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — French President Francois Mitterrand's scheduled visit to Jordan this month aims to push forward the Middle East peace process, French Ambassador to Jordan Denis Bauchard said Tuesday in an interview with the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Mr. Bauchard said that the French president's visit to Jordan and other countries in the region at the end of the month is part of comprehensive efforts to boost the Middle East peace talks through proposing certain ideas with the objective of achieving a just and comprehensive peace.

The ambassador said Mr. Mitterrand's visit comes in response to an invitation extended to him by His Majesty King Hussein, who has special relations with the French president. These special relations between the two leaders have helped boost Franco-Jordanian relations; "President Mitterrand's visit also clearly demonstrates Jordan's key role in the peace process," he said.

Mr. Mitterrand believes France can contribute to the peace process through providing the necessary support for it, he said, adding that the president thinks that he can play a personal role in this regard.

The ambassador said relations between the Arab World and France go back a long time.

"In the economic field, we need the Middle East to supply us with oil, and I think Europe can provide the technology and expertise to the countries of the region," he said. "From a political point of view, the Middle East is considered part of our security, and we need to have a stable Middle East and Arab World, and in this regard I believe Europe can propose some ideas to achieve peace in the Middle East and resolve the Palestine question," he added.

Mr. Bauchard said there was a change in Israel's position vis-a-vis the European role in the peace process. "Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir challenged Europe's role in the process, no matter what the nature of this role was, and in addition, there was a lack of confidence between the Shamir and French government. The situation has now changed, and French-Israeli relations have improved."

He said Israel now accepts an active European role in the Arab-Israeli talks, which he described as a positive stand, adding that Europe will try to find new ideas which might help reach a peaceful settlement in the Arab-Israeli dispute. He noted that it was too early to reveal the nature of ideas carried by Mr. Mitterrand to the region.

Mr. Bauchard said there was a continuation of France's policies on the Middle East over the past 20 years and pointed out that his country had worked hard within the European Community (EC) to take a positive stand on the conflict in the Middle East, thus leading to the 1981 Declaration of

Jordan tells U.N. Palestinian issue must be resolved politically

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan's permanent representative to the United Nations Adnan Abu Odeh Monday said that the Palestinian refugee problem is primarily a political issue which resulted in a humanitarian tragedy. In an address to the Special Political Committee of the U.N. General Assembly, Abu Odeh stressed the inseparable relation between the political and humanitarian dimensions of the Palestinian refugees. The creation of a special committee on refugees emanating from the multilateral talks between Arab and Israeli delegations is indicative of the importance of the political dimension of the Palestinian question, Mr. Abu Odeh said.

He pointed out that Jordan hosts the largest number of Palestinian refugees, and that it has borne the brunt of this tragedy. "Jordan was affected the most by the Palestinians' tragedy and its developments from the political, economic and social sides," Abu Odeh said. He noted that Jordan has continued to receive waves of Palestinian refugees since June 1967, when Palestinian families and individuals were forced out of their homeland in the occupied Arab Territories as a result of the security and economic pressures they are exposed to.

Mr. Abu Odeh referred to the great number of returns from the Gulf, saying almost 300,000 people returned to Jordan. This theoretically means additional responsibilities not only to my country, but also to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA), who should attend to the needs of those refugees.

Mr. Abu Odeh said UNRWA's services have always been insufficient for financial reasons, which mean in practical terms that more burdens will be placed on Jordan's infrastructure and treasury. This places Jordan in a unique situation as far as the refugee problem is concerned.

Therefore, Mr. Abu Odeh said, the Jordanian government takes genuine interest in UNRWA's services and activities, which should be continued and enhanced until a just permanent and comprehensive solution to the Palestine problem is reached. He called on the International community to increase its contributions to UNRWA to enable it to provide its badly needed services to the Palestinian refugees.

Mr. Abu Odeh criticized the international community for failing to provide the necessary funds to this agency to enable it to run its programmes smoothly. "UNRWA's budget can barely cater for the minimum acceptable needs of the Palestinian refugees," Mr. Abu Odeh said. He added that failure to provide the enough funds for UNRWA means that one of the basic pillars for ensuring the success of the peace process will be shaken. He criticized the Israeli authorities for their oppressive measures against the Palestinian refugees inside and outside the refugee camps, and called for an end to the arrest of UNRWA staff.

Mr. Abu Odeh called on the international community to make every possible effort to ensure the security and legal rights of the Palestinians living under occupation, and to put pressure on Israel to allow the return of all displaced Palestinians to their towns and cities in the occupied territories. He stressed the need to mount new income generation projects in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip to improve the living conditions of people there and address the unemployment problems which has reached alarming levels. Mr. Abu Odeh called for the relocation of UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to its area of operation to facilitate the smooth delivery of its services.



Adnan Abu Odeh

Civil Service working towards reform

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has for fresh initiatives to reform the government's administrative system, according to a statement issued by President Abdullah this morning.

The statement said that the CSC had introduced amendments to the civil service system with the aim of reducing bureaucracies at government departments and offices. The first of these amendments which were approved by the Cabinet include transferring some of the powers of the higher posts to the lower ones, such as the powers of the minister to the secretary general of a ministry.

The second group of amendments which will be sent to the Cabinet in December deal with the CSC's policies on promotions and upgrading and the relationship between public institutions to the civil service system, he said.

At the graduation ceremony, Director General of the Institute Zubair Al Kayed delivered an address in which he congratulated the graduates. Twenty-two directors from various government departments were enrolled in the nine-week programme which included lectures aiming to increase their knowledge in administrative fields.

Ulayyan said no official was promoted to a first-grade level as he was enrolled in the administration programme.

Queen attends children's contest

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Majesty Queen Noor attended Monday a contest in the Palace Culture in Amman a ceremony held to honour the children's creative production contest in which children aged between 4-15 years took part. Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation for the Blind, Mr. Abdul Majeed Shoman, delivered at the ceremony an address in which he commended Queen Noor's care for children.

WHAT'S GOING ON

Following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and daily A-bic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition of oil paintings by Jordanian artist Omar Hamdan at Alia Art Gallery.

Japanese products fair at the International Expo Centre, University Road.

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Child care training course begins at Al Bashir hospital

AMMAN (Petra) — A training course for doctors on safe motherhood and 'birth spacing' started Tuesday at Al Bashir government hospital in Amman.

Fifteen doctors from various parts of the Kingdom are taking part in the week-long course which is organized by the ministry of Health in cooperation with the U.S. agency for international development (USAID).

Health Minister Aref Bataineh delivered an address at the opening ceremony in which he said that safe motherhood and birth spacing are important in basic health care programmes because they tackle two major problems: the rise in mortality rates of both mothers and infants.

Dr. Bataineh said complications during the pregnancy period are responsible for 10-30 per cent of mothers' mortality rates in developing countries, while they are less than two per cent in developed industrial countries.

He said holding the course and similar seminars and workshops is a clear indication of the desire to increase knowledge of these problems and to encourage researches in the field. "Furthermore, this is evidence of the care accorded by our medical sector to mothers and children alike, whose health safety is the foundation of a sound society," he said.

The minister said all monotheistic religions have called for giving child and mother care sufficient time, and the ministry of health considers mother and child care the essence of its health care programmes.

"The ministry seeks to improve mothers' health conditions, reduce diseases that afflict mothers and cause their death, reduce mothers' mortality rate, and coordinate work between the health sector and other sectors to provide the proper social support for such health programmes," he said.

Dr. Bataineh said the ministry is providing health care for mothers and children at 230 mother and child care centres all over the Kingdom, adding that the ministry encourages delivering babies under the supervision of doctors or certified midwives.

"We have achieved a tangible progress in this field, where the percentage of deliveries under medical supervision reached 75 per cent," he said.

UNRWA calls for Palestinian solution

AMMAN (J.T.) — UNRWA Commissioner-General Iler Turkmen presented his Annual Report on the work of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly in New York on Monday which stated that a solution to the Palestine question was "urgently needed."

"I hope that my Annual Report reflects with sufficient clarity the danger inherent in the disjunction between the peace negotiations and the situation in the occupied territory," Mr. Turkmen said in introducing his report. As UNRWA was involved in the daily life of the Palestinians, it was obvious that the peace talks should be accompanied by significant measures to improve the general atmosphere in the occupied territory and to contribute to greater confidence and relaxation of tensions.

New UNRWA registration cards to be issued to Palestinian refugees

By Lima Nabli
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has embarked on the distribution of new registration cards for almost 2.7 million Palestinians according to Denis Brown director of UNRWA Affairs in Jordan. In a statement to the Jordan Times, Mr. Brown said the old cards issued to hold two categories, namely R and N.

Refugees under R category are Palestinians who are living in UNRWA's area of operation who do not earn sufficient income to support themselves and their dependants. Refugees registered under category N are Palestinians who were not living in the agency's area of operation, and earn sufficient income.

He added that this can be achieved also by providing health care for all citizens, concentrating on continued medical education with the aim of improving on existing medical services offered to citizens and encouraging medical researches and studies.

He said the course at Al Bashir Hospital aims to develop a modern administrative system that would help in selecting health workers and providing treating and supervision for medical cadres.

Participants in the course will receive lectures and training on the optimal pregnancy and its role in protecting mothers, the importance of birth spacing, birth controls and breast feeding.

The opening ceremony was attended by Secretary General of the Ministry of Health Adnan Abbas and the American ambassador, Roger Harrison.

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Good morning Mr. President

BY THE time the Middle East wakes up this morning, the results of the U.S. presidential elections will be all known and appreciated. In a way the peoples of the world have got used to poll projections about Bill Clinton being favoured by the Americans as the next U.S. president. Whether the morning news will confirm this projection is another matter despite the fact that the gap between Clinton and the incumbent president was widening instead of contracting as the race for the White House was winding up late Monday night, American standard time. In this sense all the excitement usually associated with the election of the president of the U.S. is all exhausted. By today, the peoples and countries of the Middle East will start assessing how the election of the next president in Washington is going to affect their lives and future. Uppermost on the minds of the peoples and governments of the region is how the peace process is going to fare under the leadership of a new chief executive at the White House. From the looks of things it will be some time before the fallouts of the Tuesday elections are digested and calculated. The sceptics of the peace negotiations would probably feel at ease at the prospect of an interruption in the peace talks. They never wanted the peace process to get off the ground in the first place. Status quo for them is a bliss and if the much dreaded peace parleys can be jettisoned by the results of the new presidential elections in the country that brokered the peace process, so be it. To be sure there are forces on both sides of the fence that would welcome any slowdown in the peace talks. That is why the new occupier of the White House must hasten to pronounce himself and his administration on the future of the peace negotiations. All the countries of the world have a stake in the ongoing peace efforts and the White House should associate itself with this sentiment as soon as possible. Even before officially taking the oath of office in January, the next president must make a policy statement outlining his commitment to the continuous campaign for peace in the Middle East. There is every hope that that will happen soon and most probably before the resumption of the peace talks in Washington on Nov. 9. As to the effects of the presidential elections on other international conflicts and issues, one also awaits the early pronouncements of the next president with great deal of anticipation. On the top of the list of course is the Yugoslav conflict and the famine in Somalia and Sudan. The world, thanks to CNN, has really become a global village, and thanks or no thanks to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the seat of the U.S. president and his role in world politics has grown larger and larger. Whether it is Bush or Clinton, the next U.S. president needs to appreciate that the world is waiting for his actions and pronouncements. Because whether we like or not, the U.S. is modern day sole superpower and whatever policies it adopts or actions it takes are bound to affect people everywhere.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WE FOOL no one but ourselves if we say that the American consciousness and its moral and spiritual values will determine the winner of the U.S. presidential elections, the Arabic daily Al Ra'i said in an editorial Tuesday. The U.S., it said, is not an old country whose values and traditions developed for thousands of years. It is not the East, where monotheistic religions were revealed and it is not the Europe of history and civilisation, the paper said. The United States, it said, is a country made of the worst that other societies could offer: of immigrants escaping the justice of their countries, and of fortune-hunters who sought wealth at any material or moral cost. Accordingly, said Al Ra'i, the U.S. administration have mostly been governed in their policies by this worst example of human societies. Slaughtering, starving, and bombing other peoples have always been American acts justified by a racist American desire. The paper said that the history of the United States is one of massacres carried out against others. It is not strange, therefore, that an American president takes pride in slaughtering an Arab people to satisfy cheap lust, in denying Arab children food and milk to fulfil beastly desires, and in denying medicine to Arab patients so that to watch them die of pain, the paper said. It will not be surprising if Americans elect President George Bush (for a second term) because a murderous society always chooses a murderer to lead it, it said. Such are the values that have guided Mr. Bush since he became president and this explains his happiness in seeing millions fight in Eastern Europe, millions suffering in Iraq and other places, the paper added. We wish the fall of Mr. Bush because we want to see another head rolling: we wish he is sent into oblivion because we wish to see a murderer stop accusing others of terrorism, while he practices it, of racism, while he exercises it and of being uncivilised, while his deeds bring to mind, the images of all murders, beginning with Huloq (a Mongol leader who invaded Baghdad in 1258), the paper went on saying. Both the old and the new Huloq left behind nothing but shame for themselves and for the people who chose them as leaders.

ALSO COMMENTING on the American presidential elections, Al Dustour Arabic daily expressed its indifference to the outcome of the elections because, it said, all candidates support Israel. We cannot sympathise with any of the candidates because they all are trying to win the Jewish vote and are promising continued support for Israel, the paper said.

Economic Forum

By Dr. Abdalla Malki

More of the currency talk

During the last three months we have been advising the readers here and in other forums to stick to their U.S. dollars and even to buy more of them with their other foreign currency holdings, if they have any. The dollar has been picking up nicely. But by how much?

The dollar has, of course, a price against each and every other currency. However, when columnists and analysts talk about a rise or fall in that price, they have in mind its price versus major convertible currencies, namely the Deutsch mark, pound sterling, French franc and Japanese yen. To these, one may add the Swiss franc and Canadian dollar.

A major recent shift in international currency markets has been taking place since Sept. 16, the so-called Black Wednesday. During the last two months, September and October, the dollar rose around 27.3 per cent against the sterling, 10 per cent against the French franc, 10.6 per cent against the mark, 11 per cent against the Swiss franc and 0.5 per cent against the yen. The variation in these ratios is wide to the extent that it is inaccurate to gauge the rise or drop in the value of the dollar with reference to a single currency, although this is exactly what we commonly do in our daily talks and conversations.

It is neither correct to say that the dollar rose by a percentage equal to the arithmetic mean of the above ratios, that is by 12 per cent in the above example, because the volume of economic activity between the United States and each of the countries of these currencies (Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, France and Switzerland) is different and thus the importance, or weight, of each exchange rate rise (or drop) is different.

To illustrate, imagine a situation where the United States deals only with one country, say, Germany. In this case, what totally matters is how much the dollar soars or drops against the mark. If it rises by, say, 20 per cent then we should address ourselves to this increase; we say that the dollar rose by 20 per cent even

though it might plunge against each and every other currency.

The correct specification of the movement of the dollar, or any other currency, should not therefore be stated with reference to the arithmetic mean of its increases or decreases versus other currencies, but to a mean that takes into account the volume of the economic activity between the United States and other countries. Under the familiar data limitations, the best proxy for that volume is external trade which is very well quantified and documented among all countries. Thus, the above-mentioned increases in the exchange rate of the dollar against the major currencies are weighted by the volume of the American trade with the countries of these currencies to arrive at what is termed the "trade weighted" rise in the exchange rate of the dollar.

In Jordan, the dinar is linked, more or less, with the U.S. dollar. When the dollar advances (or retreats) by, say, five steps against major currencies, the dinar simultaneously rises (or drops) four steps. During the last two months, September and October, the Jordan dinar dropped 2.3 per cent against the dollar but improved by 8.2 per cent against other major currencies traded in our foreign exchange market.

Because of the very close link between the greenback and the Jordanian currency, the widely anticipated improvement in the dollar during the next twelve months makes the holding of dinar balances relatively safe (as the dinar will be appreciating with the dollar). We certainly believe that this is a very opportune time for those who have borrowed in the Jordanian dinar and are therefore paying a debt service rate of 10-13 per cent to convert their foreign currency holdings into the dinar and settle their overdrafts or even to hold them on their own. Those borrowers should not be apprehensive about the depreciation of the dinar as the possibility of such depreciation is completely out of question, at least during the next 12 months.

American society still lacks the will to kick the oil addiction

By Nick Kotz and Rick Young

WASHINGTON — In December 1990, as America moved towards war in the Gulf, President George Bush's top advisers met at the White House to shape his proposed energy plan. Brent Scowcroft, listed with growing dismay as the cabinet rejected measure after measure to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil. Finally he asked in frustration, "What are we fighting this war for, anyway?"

No one answered. Mr. Scowcroft's question remains pertinent in light of the energy legislation passed by Congress last month and soon to be signed by President Bush. Although the legislation takes modest steps to promote energy efficiency and alternative fuels, remarkably it will leave America more, not less, dependent on Gulf oil in the years ahead.

Three times in less than 20 years, the U.S. economy has been rocked by oil shocks that resulted from wars or revolutions in the Middle East. And its vulnerability is increasing. Oil imports are expected to rise from about 50 per cent today to as much as 70 per cent of total oil needs by 2010.

The United States has 5 per cent of the world's population yet consumes 25 per cent of its energy. Infatuation with fossil fuels is poisoning the planet. With America's environment, economy and national security at stake, why did this administration and Congress, like previous ones, fail to tackle the energy problem decisively?

The failure this time around began with a divided Bush administration lacking conviction and a sense of urgency. Early

attempts by Energy Secretary James Watkins to forge a national energy agenda met stiff resistance from a White House unwilling to accept a larger government role in energy policy and opposed to any actions that required taxes or interfered with the "free market."

Still, others within the administration believed that decisive action was needed. As the Iraqi army rolled across Kuwait, a heated battle developed between the defense establishment and the president's economic advisers. Internal administration documents show that the Defense and State departments fought vigorously for virtually every measure that would reduce dependence on foreign oil, including an increased gasoline tax, higher auto fuel efficiency standards and an expanded Strategic Petroleum Reserve. But at the urging of his economic advisers, the president rejected each of these options.

The Bush plan was received by a Congress equally divided and equally unsuccessful in charting a new course on energy. The environmental lobby opposed opening the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, and the auto industry opposed increased fuel mileage standards. They killed any bill with either provision.

With billions of dollars in business at stake, the usual collection of energy lobbies cashed in. The auto, nuclear and oil industries have pumped \$45 million into congressional campaign coffers since 1985.

The auto industry defeated fuel efficiency increases that could save 2 million barrels of oil a day. And the nuclear industry won an easier plant licensing process as part of the government's attempt to bring nuclear power back in a big way.

The oil industry successfully fended off efforts to replace a

portion of gasoline sales with alternative fuels. And the auto industry eviscerated requirements for large vehicle fleets to run on these alternatives.

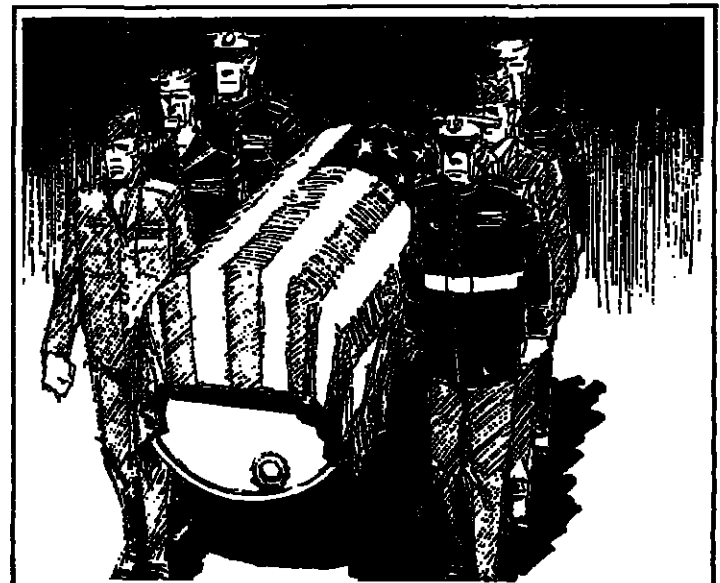
So now the legislation's "centro-piece" for reducing oil dependency will cut imports by less than 1 per cent.

The committees that set energy policies are stacked with members representing the traditional energy players, like the oil, coal, nuclear and auto industries. These members represent their constituents' parochial interests, not necessarily the national interest.

Even a proposal to increase the size of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve through a half-cent per gallon tax on gasoline was defeated by Congress. Here opposition came from the Bush administration, the oil industry and politicians fearful of voting for any tax increase. This oil reserve, now 570 million barrels stored in Texas and Louisiana, is America's first line of defense against another devastating cutoff. When politicians fear that voters will not support even a fractional gas tax increase, the full dimensions of the inability to act come into sharp focus.

Meanwhile, the environment is becoming more polluted and the addiction to oil remains unabated. There will be more turmoil in the Middle East. Few experts believe that the United States will be as lucky as the last time, when American casualties were relatively few and the oil shock was short-lived.

The real question in Washington today is how to go beyond business as usual. To do that, the American people must recognise that too often they confuse their special interests with the good of the country — the Washington Post.



Election eve question in Tokyo: Who knows Bill Clinton?

By Michael Hirsh
The Associated Press

TOKYO — In the capital of America's No. 1 economic rival, the biggest growth industry these days is Bill Clinton.

The Finance Ministry has sent emissaries deep into Arkansas seeking information. Foreign Ministry officials are making lunch dates with the few Japanese who've broken bread with him. Businessmen are casting their minds back 12 years for wispy memories of Democratic contacts.

The old Tokyo-to-Washington game of back-door lobbying — a practice criticised by both Mr. Clinton and challenger Ross Perot — has begun afresh, spurred by fears of a new administration full of unknowns.

"Many American lobbyists are approaching Japanese companies, saying they are very well connected to Democrats," said Yukio Okamoto, a Japanese diplomat turned consultant on U.S.-Japan relations.

In a country where personal relationships count far more than official channels, what's cause the most unease is that almost no one here knows much about Mr. Clinton or his advisers.

The powerful Finance Ministry has sent secret emissaries to the Clinton camp, "but there are so many people around him it was

hard to know who to talk to," complained one official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

One of those seeking to build ties with Mr. Clinton for Japan is Michael C. Mullen, a retired U.S. Navy intelligence officer. He was recently dispatched to Arkansas and Washington by his boss, Takujiro Hamada, a legislator close to Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa.

"It was solely for the purpose of getting acquainted," Mr. Mullen said Thursday upon returning. "If in the future we have to do business, we'll have some people we know and can call on the phone."

Though Mr. Clinton's election is not yet certain, the change in attitude towards him since earlier this year has been dramatic.

Only last February, reflecting the traditional Japanese view that Republicans are good for open markets while Democrats favour protectionism, an official with the economic planning agency wrote in a leading journal that Japan had to do all it could to get Mr. Bush reelected.

Today, it's difficult to find a Japanese in government who can't find something good to say about the front-runner.

"He was an outstanding person," said legislator Kazuo Aichi about his meeting with Mr. Clinton at a governors' conference.

"Even though he was young, I had the impression he was a real leader."

Much of the pro-Clinton sentiment appears genuine, a feeling that the Democrat will do better at regenerating the U.S. economy, which is Japan's biggest market and underpins America's role as Japan's military protector.

"The Japanese realise they can't sell VCRs to the homeless," said Thomas Zengge, a Tokyo management consultant and Republican who has joined the Clinton campaign.

"Also, a bad economy just makes the U.S. more strident on trade issues," he said. "Lately, Japanese at the CEO level are telling me they think Clinton would be better for the economy."

Perhaps the biggest hope is that Mr. Clinton, as the first U.S. president born after World War II, will represent a leap beyond the cold war stance of treating Japan as a very junior diplomatic partner.

Another man with a busy telephone is Yuji Yaegashi, sole representative in the Arkansas State Office in Tokyo. He said he had had dozens of calls from business, media and government "trying to find a human pipeline who knows him."

Mr. Clinton hasn't been to Tokyo since September 1988,

when he and fellow governors from Louisiana and Mississippi came seeking investment for their hard-up southern states. No one paid much attention to Mr. Clinton then, and Mr. Yaegashi said some officials now admit, "did we meet him then?"

"They always ask, 'do you think Gov. Clinton likes Japan?' I tell them yes, especially its education system."

Trade, however, is another matter. With Japan's surplus heading for a record this year, "the Japan-U.S. relationship is going to head through a stormy period again, whoever gets elected," said Mr. Okamoto.

Japan is clearly concerned by some of Clinton's positions: His support for economic sanctions on trade, his advocacy of an economic Security Council, and his proposal that overseas corporations in the United States be taxed more.

Also worrisome is his proposal to crack down on former U.S. officials who lobby for foreign interests.

Mr. Okamoto said he has been advising Japanese companies not to try to set up back-door channels to a Clinton administration. "It is wrong for Japanese companies to look for preferential treatment," he said. "If they are doing normal and honourable business, they shouldn't worry."

Arab reconciliation: The case for democracy

By Ayman Al Safadi

TO JORDANIAN and other Arab officials, the visit of King Hassan II of Morocco to the region last week achieved a qualified success. "There were positive indications that everybody is interested in Arab reconciliation," one Jordanian official said.

The Moroccan monarch was leading an effort to heal the rift among Arab countries, that would have been crowned by the convening of an Arab summit where Arab leaders would bury grudges of the past.

The call for the summit has not been made: grounds upon which reconciliation would proceed have not been revealed; and Arab masses will once again be forced to follow as a fait accompli the decisions of their leaders.

Reconciliation among Arab countries is a popular demand, a crucial necessity without which the Arab World will continue to be a marginal entity in a world increasingly dominated by regional groups forging closer alliances.

But an Arab rapprochement based on the edifice of the past, achieved through the tenants of tribal culture and subject to the whims of individuals is something we are better off without. Such reconciliation, like many similar "achievements" in the past, will prolong the life of the shaky foundations upon which the Arab system is based.

The current division in the Arab World is often blamed on the Gulf war and the conflicting stands which various Arab countries and politics adopted in handling it. This is a superficial assessment. The disarray of the Arab World has its roots in more fundamental aspects of our political, social, and economic systems; in the very structure of the Arab World.

Less than one decade away from the 21st century, millions of Arabs are still governed by autocratic regimes that run their countries the way their ancestors ruled their tribes. Blinded by absolute power, most of the ruling elite refused to respond to the realities of the time, failing to erect the political and social mechanisms necessary to cope with an increasingly interdependent, more challenging modern world.

When crisis erupted, many Arab leaders failed the test. Their regimes proved bankrupt. National interests were sacrificed for individual ambitions and the survival of the few was placed over the well-being of the majority.

The failure of Arab leaders to construct a regional structure through which to deal with potential conflicts came back to haunt them.

It is in this context that any talk of new Arab reconciliation should be assessed.

Unless the lessons of the war guide the process, any of ranks will further make our future and our nation's interests. And unless the past is used to ensure success of the future, the system that has "crippled" growth, jeopardised our unity and compromised our independence will continue to backward, away from social and economic development.

Arab masses should be reconciled if it fails to the root causes of the antagonism. It is their knowledge what qualifies the elites of today to be the elites tomorrow. And it is their demand that Arab leaders them ample reason to have in the status quo that is going to create.

Reconciliation should be approached with pragmatism should foster co-operative mechanisms and regional structures invulnerable to the of individuals and equip institutions that can cope with demands of a complicated modern world. It should lead to ten agreements on border environment, economic situation, labour movement, above all, respect for rights and individual freedom.

Unless Arab regimes capable of charting such a rationalised path for the new Arab order that upholds interests of the nation, Arab reconciliation will be at best underestimates, and completely disregards, the rights and interests of the Arab people.

This, unfortunately, does seem attainable at present.

As the Gulf war demonstrates, totalitarian regimes and cannot honour such commitments. Their perils are bound to conflict the needs of their people's progress of their societies.

The ultimate goal of man, equality for all, therefore an innate contradiction between hopes for progress Arab World and the totalitarian political system that continue to draft its

Institutionalised democratic precondition for regional development and successful creation. Unfortunately, less than a handful of Arab governments seem to acknowledge this fact.

That said, there is I expect from current efforts to achieve Arab reconciliation in that light, the Moroccan diplomacy is no reason for optimism.

The writer is a Jordanian member.

LETTERS

Nobody stops them

To the Editor:

AFTER RETURNING from a trip to the U.S. I have read newspaper articles or heard radio and TV programs concerning the severe traffic problems and accidents in Jordan. After hearing that there is even a club, one can join, solely for study and prevention of car accidents in Jordan, I felt motivated to write.

When I was in the U.S. I got behind the wheel to drive automatically went into my Jordanian mode of driving, every driver to do everything wrong and break every rule they could. It did NOT happen! Virtually everyone was following the laws and driving was a pleasure (even in a large city). I mean Americans are more intelligent or innately more abiding? The answer is an absolute no.

Americans drive sanely and follow the laws because they are forced to. If one breaks a traffic law in the U.S., there are policemen consistently on duty to give the driver a BIG fine and a black mark on his/her license. In most states, after three marks in one year a driver loses his/her license. The only way to regain the license is to attend a special school for bad drivers. During the school classes, students are given lessons in driving safely but they are also shown videos of real car accidents being pulled out of their wrecked vehicles. After the bad driver completes their school classes they are tested very carefully. It takes a year's time to regain a lost license. If a driver has the "brilliant" idea to go ahead and drive without a license he/she faces a huge fine and possibly a jail sentence. (There is enough space to describe what happens to a driver who is arrested while under the influence of alcohol.)

My whole point is: Drivers in Jordan drive carelessly. Nobody stops them. (A JD5 fine for speeding won't stop anyone, but a JD150 fine has an effect.)

After witnessing the wonderful way Jordanians unite to welcome His Majesty King Hussein home and also to raise money for the new cancer centre, I feel the Jordanian family tremendous strength and power. With the correct guidance, help, Jordanians can unite to have good, efficient, and fair law enforcement. We can stop the terrible waste and destruction of lives and property that someone "takes the horns" very soon on this issue. I am the first in line to fight this very real problem.

M. Sakjikh
P.O. Box 15
Amman.

Reconciliation: Peer verdict on Tuesday

Al Safadi

Unless the lesser of ranks will survive, our future and our interests. And unless the past is used as a well-spring of the future, a system that has brought growth, prosperity and compromise to a nation will be backward, away from social and economic development.

Arab masses of Al Nafeer, which stated the root causes of the Arab areas around antagonism. It is a jihad and armed struggle to establish a new Arab society.

Reconciliation should be the basis of the new Arab order. It should be the basis of the new Arab order. It should be the basis of the new Arab order.

— On charges of slander against members of Parliament, Mr. Hadid insisted that such charges can only be pressed by those who have been slandered and not by state prosecutors and that in legal terms "slander" has to take place in public or in the media to be established as such.

Wiretapped telephone conversations containing what a sound engineer identified as Mr. Shbeilat's voice cursing members of Parliament are the evidence produced by the prosecution to support the slander charge.

Mr. Hadid described wiretapping as unconstitutional and said the privacy of telephone calls could not be violated.

photo album confiscated from Mr. Shbeilat's office, which was said to have had pictures of ruined homes and well-known sayings by King Hussein. A police officer testified that the writings on the photo album belonged to Mr. Shbeilat, but the defence had then tried to establish that the writings were that of "Sami Al Ajrab, a citizen with a complaint."

Sheikh Qarrash's lawyer, in his 13-page summation, focused on the following and made these demands:

— To disregard the testimonies of the witnesses who were at the time being held at the General Intelligence Department (GID) in connection with another case;

— That the court disregard the aims of the organisation was not in Sheikh Qarrash's handwriting, nor was it signed by him;

— That the court disregard information gained from the wiretapped phone conversation and cited constitutional rights and the privacy act.

The lawyer sought to discredit the testimony of the "expert" who identified Sheikh Qarrash's voice, citing that it was the first time he was asked to analyse the voices on tapes and the first "expert" testimony.

He also argued that the explosives found in the possession of the third and fourth defendants were for use inside the occupied territories, and that all the witnesses had testified to this effect.

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3/11/92

1 MTH 3 MTHS 6 MTHS 12 MTHS

Dollar 3.12 3.30 3.50 3.81

Pound 7.93 7.50 8.81 9.62

Mark 8.93 8.87 8.50 7.93

Franc 4.31 4.31 4.18 4.00

Franc 9.50 9.62 9.37 9.58

Yen 3.81 3.75 3.65 3.58

European Currency Unit 10.43 10.12 9.71 9.43

3/11/92

USD/Oz JD/Gm Metal USD/Oz JD/Gm

Gold 340.10 6.45 Silver 3.80 5.5

3/11/92

Bid Offer

Dollar 0.687 0.689

Pound 1.0495 1.0547

Mark 0.4375 0.4397

Franc 0.4894 0.4916

Franc 0.1292 0.1298

Yen 0.5559 0.5587

Gold 0.3888 0.3907

Edich Krona 3.1162 0.1166

Ban Lira 0.0510 0.0513

Iran Franc 0.02127 0.02138

3/11/92

Bid Offer

Dinar 1.7970 1.8200

Lira 0.03655 0.03955

Riyal 0.1829 0.1840

Dinar 2.2900 2.3000

Riyal 0.1861 0.1872

Pound 0.2000 0.2100

Riyal 1.7560 1.7820

Dirham 1.1861 0.1872

Drachma 0.3435 0.3465

Pound 1.4755 1.4955

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1/11/92 Close 2/11/92 Close

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5.3200/300

1342/1346

123.70/80

5.9240/340

6.4100/200

6.0335/435

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Danish crowns

'U.S. wealth concentration in 1989 was the most extreme than that of any time since '29'

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top one-half of one per cent of the nation's richest families received 55 per cent of the total increase in household wealth between 1983 and 1989, according to a study.

The study, "The rich get increasingly richer," found that while the "super-rich" enjoyed rapid growth of wealth, the bottom 60 per cent of families found their wealth either stagnating or falling by 1989.

"A comparison of 1983 and 1989 data reveals a sharp increase in wealth inequality over the period," Edward Wolff, the New York University economics professor who wrote the study, asserted. "U.S. wealth concentration in 1989 was more extreme than that of any time since 1929."

The study was released by the Economic Policy Institute, which describes itself as a non-profit, non-partisan economic think tank supported by foundations, labour unions, corporations and individuals.

Dr. Wolff found that family wealth increased by \$2.6 trillion, from \$13.6 trillion to \$16.1 trillion, between 1983 and 1989. Fifty-five per cent of the increase went to the top half of one per cent of families.

At the same time, he said, the lower-middle and bottom wealth classes collectively lost \$256 billion in wealth.

Dr. Wolff contends that wealth provides a more complete picture of family well-being than the typical measure using income.

Wealth, he wrote, refers to the net value of assets — such as stocks, savings accounts and housing — less debt. Income, on the other hand, refers to a flow of dollars over a set period, usually a year — such as salary, interest and dividends.

Families receiving the same income can experience different levels of economic well-being depending on their assets, such as housing and other possessions, he wrote.

For instance, wealth can provide the stability to ensure a family's well-being by providing the resources necessary to weather unemployment or illness or provide for consumption costing more than income, he said.

Other findings included:

"Wealth is even more concentrated than income. In 1989, the top fifth of wealth holders owned 80 per cent of total household wealth, but the top fifth of income recipients accounts for only a little over half of total family income.

Seventy per cent of the growth in wealth resulted from appreciation of existing wealth and the remaining 30 per cent to personal savings. Thus, he contended, most of the wealth increase was due to capital gains, not thrift.

Between 1983 and 1989, the indebtedness of American households increased from 15 per cent of net worth to almost 19 per cent.

An anti-poverty research group said that poverty is increasing faster among white people who are not Hispanic than among blacks.

The number of non-Hispanic whites living in poverty increased 14 per cent while the poor black population increased 10 per cent between 1989 and 1991, said a report by the Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities.

At the same time, the numbers of Hispanic poor increased 17 per cent, but the centre said some of this increase was because of rapid growth in the country's Hispanic population.

"Poverty among non-Hispanic whites has received scant attention," the centre said.

It said that "half of the nation's 34.7 million poor people are non-Hispanic whites and recent poverty trends among this group have not been encouraging."

The centre, a non-profit organisation supported primarily by charitable foundations, said non-Hispanic whites now constitute a majority of the poor in 33 states.

In seven other states, non-Hispanic whites are the largest group among the poor, although not a majority.

In Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi and South Carolina, blacks are the largest group. Hispanics lead in California, New Mexico and Texas and people of Asian or Pacific island descent are the largest group of poor in Hawaii.

In the report entitled "white poverty in America," the centre said 51 per cent of the 4.2 million people added to the ranks of the poor between 1989 and 1991 were whites other than Hispanic.

Blacks and Hispanics each accounted for 22 per cent of the growth of poor people.

Hispanic is an ethnic not a racial designation. There are Hispanics of all races, but 95 per cent of them list themselves as white.

Despite the overall statistics, a black or Hispanic person was much more likely to be poor than a white individual. The report said nearly one in 10 whites was poor in 1991, but the poverty rates among blacks and Hispanics were nearly triple this.

The report used the Census Bureau definition of poverty, which is based on an income level varying by family size.

Japanese banks to set up private bailout company

TOKYO (AP) — The Japanese banking industry has announced plans to start its own joint company to liquidate hundreds of billions of dollars in bad loans made during the speculative boom of the 1980s.

But analysts and industry insiders say they doubt a rescue funded only by the banks themselves will end the financial crisis. The debt mess, they say, will eventually require government intervention.

"The banks had to come up with something. They have to do something before they beg the government for help," said Richard Koo, senior economist at Nomura Research Institute.

Loans to major banks on which interest payments are at least six months overdue almost doubled to 12.3 trillion yen (\$100 billion) from March to September and were expected to rise further, the finance ministry has reported.

The loans were made during the late 1980s, when stock and real estate prices soared and lenders accepted those inflated assets as collateral. Prices have since plunged, bankrupting thousands of borrowers and endangering the health of banks and other financial institutions.

The bailout is intended to help banks clear their books. Failure to do so could stall a recovery from Japan's worst economic slowdown in over a decade.

The woes of the Japanese banking industry resemble those of the faltering U.S. savings-and-loans. But unlike the Resolution Trust Corporation, the government agency formed to rescue those banks, the Japanese corporation initially will get no public funding.

The debt-purchasing scheme is similar to that used by multinational banks to securitise the debts of developing countries. It was first proposed in a government package announced in August to help the Japanese economy fight inflation.

According to a broad outline announced by Tsuneo Wakai, president of Mitsubishi Bank, the new corporation would buy real estate used as collateral for non-performing loans, enabling banks to write off their losses and shrink bad debts.

Bankers say the plan is needed because they have been unable to sell the collateral on the bearish property market and thus could not take write-offs.

Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata said that the government would adapt tax rules to help banks write off losses incurred because of the debts.

"We must take this opportunity to give the banks the chance to regain public trust," Mr. Hata said.

Mr. Wakai said banks would contribute to the company's start-up capital of six billion yen (\$48.8 million) and then lend it money to buy the collateral from themselves.

The plan provided no details on how many banks would participate and how much debt they would eventually sell, raising doubts about the financial feasibility of the venture.

This has never been done before. We won't know until we give it a try," Mr. Wakai said.

Some bankers and ministry officials privately are skeptical about the willingness of stronger banks to ante up a larger share of the costs to save their troubled competitors.

"Deep in their hearts, everyone expects the government to help out" in the end, said Kathy Matsui, an analyst at Barclays de Zoete Wedd.

Japan's minimal disclosure laws and its narrow official definition of nonperforming loans have tended to obscure the actual severity of the financial crisis, making an assessment of the bailout difficult.

"How can you come up with a rescue plan when you don't even know the size of the problem?" Mr. Koo said.

Industry analysts' estimates of bad loans average around 30 trillion yen (\$244 billion). But even the much lower official estimates far exceed the government's deposit insurance account of 696 billion yen (\$5.48 billion).

Pakistan hopes for joint ventures in Central Asia

KARACHI (R) — Pakistan is optimistic about prospects for joint ventures and more trade with Central Asia despite difficulties in transport through war-torn Afghanistan, a senior trade official said.

"We have great opportunities for joint ventures in textiles, leather, banking and power," said Mian Habibullah, after leading the country's biggest trade delegation to some of the former Soviet republics.

Officials have identified cotton as a sector ripe for cooperation.

Pakistan is an experienced manufacturer of textile machinery that would complement Central Asian production of raw cotton, especially in Uzbekistan.

Pakistan is planning joint ventures in textiles, cement and sugar. Mr. Habibullah, president of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said in an interview.

He gave no details about the size or value of any deals.

He described the 10-day visit to Moscow, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bishkek and Ashkhabad as exploratory. "We will now send more trade teams specialising in different fields."

Pakistan faces competition in trade in these markets from Iran as well as South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, officials say.

Pakistan-manufactured items such as cooking oil, soap, textiles, medicines, water coolers, shoes and plastic goods are already reaching Central Asian markets, Mr. Habibullah said.

Pakistani exports to the former Soviet Union were valued at 1.51 billion rupees (\$60 million) in 1991/92 compared with imports of 3.55 billion rupees (\$140 million).

In July and August, after separate figures began to be compiled, Pakistan exported 1.7 million rupees (\$68,000) worth of goods to Uzbekistan and 1.8 million worth to Tajikistan.

Communications and trade through troubled Afghanistan, which divides Pakistan from the former Soviet states, were the main hurdle to closer cooperation, Mr. Habibullah said.

"We will go to Kabul to sort out this matter," he said.

In July, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan signed an accord to study ways of building transport routes, including railway lines, linking the three countries.

Since then Afghanistan has been racked by fighting and no progress has been reported.

Afghan roads, largely destroyed by 14 years of civil war, link landlocked Uzbekistan and ports in Pakistan.

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Rebel Caucasian leader accuses Russian president of colonialism

MOSCOW (R) — Tension simmered in Russia's volatile south on Tuesday as a rebel Caucasian leader accused President Boris Yeltsin of resorting to dangerous, colonial tactics to stamp out violent unrest.

ITAR-TASS News Agency reported fierce clashes overnight in the northern Caucasus, where dozens of people were killed in weekend fighting between Ossetians and Ingushis.

It said Russian Interior Ministry troops, paratroopers and militia had intervened to halt the clashes, which violated a two-day-old truce, and a state of emergency imposed Monday by President Boris Yeltsin.

The one-month state of emergency bans strikes and demonstrations, orders the confiscation of weapons and tightens control on broadcasting and publishing.

Interfax News Agency said 10 members of the Russian army and Interior Ministry Forces had been killed so far in the worst unrest to break out in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Yeltsin's tough measures were denounced as "a very dangerous manoeuvre" by Dzhokar Dudayev, leader of the neighbouring region of Chechnya which declared independence from Moscow a year ago and has been a persistent thorn in the president's side.

Mr. Yeltsin's decree "confirms the falseness of the Russian leadership's policy and the colonial character of the federative treaty," he said in reference to an accord between Moscow and a score of ethnic regions, which Chechnya has refused to sign.

Gen. Dudayev said he was

willing to mediate between the opposing sides, but warned ominously that Chechens would "go to help their (Ingush) brothers, and weapons will make their way there."

He reiterated earlier appeals for a union of Caucasian peoples on the basis of full independence from Moscow.

The head of Chechnya's Information Department, Movladi Udugov, accused Russian and Ossetian forces of massacring the civilian Ingush population and said there were hundreds of victims. There was no independent confirmation of the charge.

The Caucasus, subdued by Russia in the 19th century after decades of fighting, is a mountainous region inhabited by dozens of ethnic groups and divided by often arbitrary borders.

If the unrest spreads, it could pose a severe challenge to Mr. Yeltsin's authority.

TASS said North Ossetian parliamentary leader Akhsarbek Galazov would hold talks with Mr. Yeltsin in the Kremlin. A special plane was flying from Moscow to the region with emergency medical aid.

Up to 1,500 Ingush refugees, mainly women and children, had taken refuge at one Russian military base, TASS added.

Ingushis, who number about 100,000, claim parts of North Ossetia from which they were deported by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin in 1944 for alleged collaboration with Nazi Germany.

They say their claim is strengthened by a 1991 Russian law on rehabilitating "repressed peoples" and returning land confiscated from them during the Soviet era.

An Ingush official, Ibragim Kostoyev, told Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper that the latest unrest followed a string of unpunished murders of Ingushis in the disputed region which led to a spontaneous outpouring of anger.

Meanwhile, confrontation between Russia and Georgia loomed Tuesday as their forces traded accusations over the seizure of a Russian ammunition dump by Georgian government troops.

A spokesman for the Russian military in the Transcaucasian state said the dump in the western town of Akhaltsikhe had not yet been handed back by the Georgians despite an agreement reached Monday.

"A deliberate anti-Russian policy is being pursued by Georgia," Colonel Vasily Belchenko told a news conference in the capital Tbilisi.

He said Russian troops were ready to take action to free the dump. Col. Belchenko's words were given menacing weight by remarks of the Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev on Commonwealth Television Monday night.

"If talks fail to bring positive results I have no choice but to take a decision to unblock the dump using troops — aviation, tanks, artillery and infantry," Mr. Grachev said.

Georgia's leadership was split over the seizure of the huge arms dump, which ITAR-TASS News Agency said was taken after the capture of five Russian hostages Sunday.

Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze condemned the action Monday, saying those responsible were "playing with fire."

But Defence Minister Tengiz

Kitovani told local television the dump was seized on his personal orders. He accused commanders of the former Soviet troops of selling arms and ammunition from the dump.

"All this belongs to Georgia and we will not allow all this out of the republic," local journalists quoted him as saying.

Georgian officials have repeatedly accused the Russian military of supplying arms to rebels in Abkhazia, where hundreds of people have been killed since August in fighting between loyalist troops and Abkhazians separatists.

Moscow denies the charges and says its troops remain neutral. But the conflict over the dump may change its position.

Col. Belchenko said the number of attacks on Russian officers in Georgia was rapidly growing. An air force officer was beaten up in Tbilisi Monday in the presence of local military police officials.

He said the army was ready to defend itself, adding: "Our patience has its limits."

In a separate development, Russian troops have stepped in to maintain a curfew in the Tajik capital Dushanbe after fierce fighting in the Central Asian state in recent weeks, ITAR-TASS News Agency said Tuesday.

"Russian troops have been fully in charge of maintaining the curfew in Dushanbe since it was first imposed," TASS quoted a senior Russian military officer as saying.

TASS said the Russian troops had erected road blocks outside Dushanbe and the television centre was under heavy guard. Shops were virtually empty and there was a chronic shortage of meat, eggs, fruit and other staple foods.



The video-grabbed picture of Luanda TV shows arrest during fighting in the Angolan capital (AFP photo)

Angolan ceasefire holds as parties discuss prisoner swap

LISBON (R) — Sporadic shots broke the calm that has returned to the Angolan capital Luanda after four days of bloody conflict between the government and the former rebel group UNITA, Portuguese officials said Tuesday.

More than 1,000 people are reported to have died in the fighting in the former Portuguese colony.

Evacuated Portuguese arriving in Lisbon said that Luanda's residents who ventured out found some of the streets littered with bodies.

Police used an overnight curfew to disperse armed bands who carried out a brutal house-to-house manhunt for members of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA (Union for the Total Independence of Angola). UNITA's High Command has been dismantled.

But the United Nations and Portuguese government kept up behind-the-scenes efforts with the MPLA and UNITA to try to cement a fragile ceasefire, Portuguese officials said.

The ruling MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and UNITA were holding secret negotiations to exchange prisoners "as a sign of good faith," they said.

Portuguese officials confirmed reports that two top UNITA officials — the movement's vice-president, Jeremias Chitunda,

and Salupeto Pena, Mr. Savimbi's nephew and right-hand man — had been killed, apparently while trying to flee the capital.

Portuguese radio reports said the MPLA announced the capture of 14 senior UNITA officials, including its military commander General Arlindo Pena "Ben-Ben" who was seriously wounded.

Broadcasts by Angolan National Radio called for calm and appealed to civilians loyal to the ruling MPLA not to vent their fury on UNITA members.

South African diplomats in a floating hotel off Luanda said there were unconfirmed reports of fighting still under way between government and UNITA troops in Viana and at least one other town, but the capital was calm.

"The situation is fairly controlled," said a Luanda resident contacted by TSF Radio. "There are no attacks."

There was no word from Mr. Savimbi, who has been holed up in Angola's second city of Huambo in the central Highlands since late October after he rejected the outcome of a U.N.-supervised September election which gave a landslide victory to the MPLA.

The influential Portuguese paper Publico attacked him for rejecting the election result, and criticised the MPLA for allowing

UNITA officials to be killed. "Barbarism has returned to Angola," said a Publico editorial which warned that the country could slide back into civil war. "Stalinist and tribalist delirium has been imposed once more."

But many of the 130 people, mostly Portuguese, on the first evacuation plane to reach Lisbon said they hoped to return to Angola soon.

They were all in good health, though one 29-year-old Portuguese man said he was beaten and threatened by UNITA soldiers in Luanda who said they were looking for Cubans.

Cuba and the former Soviet Union backed the MPLA in the 16-year civil war against UNITA which ended last year with a ceasefire brokered by Portugal.

Mr. Savimbi was backed by the United States and South Africa. In Pretoria, Foreign Ministry sources said they had received confirmation that General Arlindo Pena and General Paulo "Gato," one of Savimbi's most trusted aides, had been killed.

"It's quieted down and our people from the mission got off the boat and drove through (Luanda). There was a lot of devastation," one of the sources said.

"But there are reports of fighting to the north and east. You can hear the sound of mortars."

Commission rejects volunteer combat role for U.S. women

WASHINGTON (AP) — Female soldiers should not be given the option of volunteering for front-line duty if men don't have the same choice, says a presidential commission that is considering relaxing the military's ban on women in direct combat.

The 15-member Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces Monday rejected the notion of a so-called dual standard that would let women volunteer for combat while men are assigned to it involuntarily.

"The services should adopt gender-neutral assignment policies, providing for the possibility of involuntary assignment of any qualified personnel to any position open to them," the panel said.

But the sharply divided commission postponed until Tuesday votes on just how much the prohibitions on women in combat should be relaxed.

The Pentagon's policy now is to keep all women, who comprise about 11 per cent of the uniformed services, out of direct combat. A poll the panel commissioned from the Roper Organisation found that 57 per cent of the military favours continuing that policy, while 42 per cent oppose it.

Nonetheless, a narrow majority of commission members appeared headed toward endorsing an expanded role for women in air and sea combat missions, while continuing to keep them out of ground fighting situations.

Women would still be banned from frontline infantry, armour and artillery assignments but could get combat roles as part of fixed-wing and helicopter aircraft crews or on surface ships under proposals up for votes Tuesday.

Congress last year repealed legal restrictions on assigning women to combat aircraft, but it established the commission to examine the impact of assigning them to combat roles there and at sea and on the ground as well.

After holding hearings for seven months and spending some \$4 million, the panel is drafting its final, non-binding recommendations for submission to President George Bush on Nov. 15.

The panel Monday rejected proposals to establish military-wide, gender-related quotas and goals for recruiting, promotions and assignments.

Instead, it said the Secretary of Defence should have discretion to set goals to optimise the use of women while ensuring that positions open to both sexes are filled by the best qualified people regardless of gender.

Bosnian Serbs deliver walkout threat in Geneva

GENEVA (R) — Bosnia's Serbs Tuesday warned international mediators that they might walk out of peace talks discussed.

Senior Serb official Nikola Koljevic handed over a copy of a decision by the insurgents' parliament containing the pull-out threat at a meeting with the mediators, a spokesman for the Geneva conference on ex-Yugoslavia said.

But conference co-chairmen Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen would not react until Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic came to Geneva "and makes the situation crystal clear," the spokesman, Derek Boothby, said.

Diplomats said the wording of the decision left open the possibility that the Serbs would stay in as long as a draft constitution for Bosnia proposed by Mr. Vance and Lord Owen last week was not the only basis for further discussion.

But the diplomats said the threat of withdrawal coupled with clear signs of increased militancy by Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia and by Serb nationalists in the ramp Yugoslavia did not bode well for the future of the two-month-old conference.

"There is a growing feeling that the Serbs across former Yugoslavia have decided that the time has come to create their 'greater Serbia' and to hell with what the world thinks," said one diplomat close to the conference.

Mr. Koljevic, head of the Serb

delegation to the conference and vice-president of the self-proclaimed Serb Republic of Bosnia, made no comment as he went into the meeting with Mr. Vance and Marti Ahtisaari who chairs the working group on Bosnia.

But conference diplomats said his appearance suggested the Serbs, clearly in triumph mood after new military successes, were not planning to challenge the international community immediately by staging a dramatic walkout.

On Monday, the Yugoslav agency Tanjug and the Serbs' own news service reported that the Bosnian Serbs' parliament had voted to leave the Bosnia working group unless their republic was formally recognised by the mediators.

Chief conference spokesman Fred Eckhard said earlier Mr. Vance and Lord Owen excluded such recognition and that it would not be accepted by the UN Security Council.

The two mediators reject division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnic entities for its Slav Muslim, Serb and Croat communities and last week proposed a constitution that would create seven to 10 regions shaped mainly on economic grounds.

Diplomatic sources close to the conference said Mr. Vance and Lord Owen saw the withdrawal warning as part of a pattern of defiance by Bosnian Serbs and hardliners in Serbia itself that has emerged over the past few days.

32 killed as rebels ambush Sri Lanka patrol

COLOMBO (R) — Twenty-three servicemen and nine rebels were killed Tuesday when Tamil separatist guerrillas ambushed a patrol in eastern Sri Lanka, police and army sources said.

A helicopter gunship, armoured cars and about 500 troops were rushed to reinforce the patrol, which was surprised by about 100 rebels near Arantalawa in the eastern Amparai district, a senior army officer said.

The patrol was searching for road mines when they were surrounded by the rebels, police said. They said 13 army and 10 policemen were killed.

The bodies of nine rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are fighting for a separate state in the island's north and east, were recovered after a one-hour battle, the officer said.

The rebels sprang the ambush as the 40-man joint air force-police patrol searched for mines at about 8:30 a.m. (0300 GMT), the officer said.

Previous reports said the fighting raged for about three hours and about 400 rebels took part. In Colombo, the military gave the death toll as 20 servicemen — nine army, nine policemen and two soldiers from the paramilitary National Guard Battalion.

Military sources said the patrol had been on a daily road-clearing operation and their movements would probably have been monitored by the Tigers for some time.

Irish coalition partners step back from brink

DUBLIN (R) — The Progressive Democrats, junior partners in Ireland's shaky ruling coalition, Tuesday stepped back from the brink and delayed any decision about withdrawing from government for 48 hours.

Their surprise announcement gave Prime Minister Albert Reynolds's government a dramatic last-minute reprieve and spared Ireland, at least for the moment, from a snap general election.

Industry Minister Desmond O'Malley, leader of the Progressive Democrats, said in a statement he had delayed his decision until Thursday to permit investigation of accusations of dishonesty against him by Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. Reynolds had accused Mr.

O'Malley of being "reckless, irresponsible and dishonest" in his testimony to a tribunal probing malpractice allegations in Ireland's troubled beef industry.

Mr. O'Malley said he had decided to postpone his decision because "tomorrow the chairman of the beef tribunal will hold a special investigation into allegations that I deliberately misled the tribunal while giving evidence under oath."

Mr. Reynolds, who started the day with a bottle of champagne to celebrate his 60th birthday, told reporters: "An election, if it occurs, would be utterly unnecessary."

"There is so much uncertainty and instability out there. This is a time when we need strong leadership."

Cameroon president calls for 'great debate'

YAOUNDE (R) — Cameroon's President Paul Biya, sworn in for his third term Tuesday after his great-disputed elections, said a "great national debate" would be held to discuss major changes to the constitution.

African leaders afraid of being

national conferences with sovereign powers have in the past, opted for national debates as a less threatening alternative.

Gen. Biya has always opposed a sovereign national conference on political reform, saying it would amount to a civil coup d'etat.

Australian government may call December poll

CANBERRA (R) — The Australian government is considering calling a snap election for Dec. 12, senior government sources said Tuesday.

Many of the Labour government's members of parliament think the party's chances will never be better and sources said Prime Minister Paul Keating, who will make the final decision, raised the possibility in a recent cabinet meeting.

"The caucus is split 50-50 on it," a senior source said.

Strong polls and the recent emergence of good campaign issues are the arguments in favour of a December poll.

A weak although strengthening economy and the fact that the government would still have to pick up votes during the campaign period are the reasons for waiting.

Dec. 12 is the last practical 1992 election date because school holidays cover the period from when until February. The election must be held by May and on a Saturday.

Dec. 12 is also the first available day because Mr. Keating must give 33 clear days notice of the election.

That rules out Dec. 5 and means that a Dec. 12 poll would have to be called by next Monday.

The government's performance in recent opinion polls is not good enough to pull off a win but, according to the sources, it may put it within striking distance.

"We were pessimistic about winning earlier in the year but at this stage we're in with a chance," said one source.

The Bulletin magazine's Morgan-Gallup Poll taken on Oct. 17 and 24 put the government's support at 40.5 per cent, little changed on the 41 per cent measured earlier in the month.

Support for the Liberal-National Party opposition was unchanged at 44 per cent.

The Oct. 28 and 29 Saulwick Poll, published in the Sydney Morning Herald and Melbourne's Age newspaper, found government support at 40 per cent, up

three percentage points on a month before. Opposition support was 43 per cent, down five.

The government won the last election, in March 1990, with only 39.4 per cent of the vote.

It won a majority of House of Representatives seats only after the complex preferential voting system redistributed the votes of smaller parties.

But support for smaller parties has since collapsed, so there will be fewer such votes to redistribute this time.

Electoral boundary changes have also disadvantaged Labour.

Political analysts say the government will probably need 45 per cent support to win the coming election. The government holds 77 seats the 148-seat lower house and the Conservative coalition has 69. There are two independents.

But the sources noted that Australian governments usually make up ground during an election campaign — often five percentage points. Labour Party sources said Mr. Keating, a

powerful campaigner, would probably better the average.

Mr. Keating also has in his hands a fresh campaign issue — the opposition's new free-market industrial policy which was politically damaged just last week by the savage implementation of a similar policy in the state of Victoria.

Victoria's new Liberal-National government abolished extra pay for weekend work and cancelled the holiday bonuses that Australian workers are accustomed to.

The state government's decision to simultaneously grant itself pay rises also damaged the Liberal-National image.

Opposition treasury spokesman Peter Reith said Tuesday the parliament was full of rumours of a Dec. 12 election to extricate treasurer John Dawkins from a damaging inquiry into unauthorised borrowing by Victoria's former Labour government.

Mr. Dawkins is alleged to have kept the extra borrowing quiet

COLUMB

German police recover 16th-century Cranach painting

BERLIN (R) — Police recovered eight paintings of 16th-century German master Cranach the elder, stolen from a Weimar museum since World War II. Month in the country's theft since World War II. Interior Ministry in many's Thuringia state said four suspects were arrested after the discovery of the paintings and 19 other stolen in the northwestern Northern. Experts place value of the eight paintings Cranach and associates million marks (\$40 m). Among the Cranach works on Oct. 12 from Weimar portrait of church reformer Martin Luther worth some 33 marks (\$9.5 million) alone. Investigators said earlier the paintings had been carried out by private acting on orders from noting the fact that two works by Cranach's contemporary Albrecht Dürer were untouched in a neighbour room.

BBC TV launches first trans-Atlantic service

LONDON (AP) — The Broadcasting Corp.'s World Television plans to launch its first trans-Atlantic service into the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Pacific in the next 14 months, chief said Monday. Chief executive Christopher Irwin said the company was on course to achieve its goal of 100 transmissions by the end of the year. "We are midway through period of rapid expansion has...put our news and information channel within its potentially 85 per cent of the world's population," Mr. Irwin said. WSTV Monday launched its first trans-Atlantic service transmissions to Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Newsworld Channel and its own Network. WSTV was established in March 1991 as a wholly BBC subsidiary. It is a funding commercial which is funded mainly by advertising and subscriptions. It ceives no government aid.

Last animal dies in Sarajevo Zoo

SARAJEVO (R) — The last animal in Sarajevo Zoo, a bear, has died of starvation, took him some bread, as last Wednesday, but he was weak to eat them...he died next day," said zoo worker Takac. "I was sad to see after all these months, but his suffering is over." The bear survived longer than any animal in captivity at the Sarajevo Zoo, under for seven months, by eating other bears which shared in the cage. It is just 100 metres from the lines of Sarajevo's Serbs and has been exposed to regular sniper and mortar fire. "We tried to feed the bear often as we could, but leaves fell from the trees, nearly impossible because snipers could see us easily, planned 60-year-old Takac, zookeeper, was shot dead by a sniper and another was attempting to feed the bear. The carcasses of lions, leopards and bears, which in the main animal house, Serb lines. Zoo workers say, eagles and wolves months ago.

Nearly 1 of 5 new cars perform poorly in crash tests

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new passenger vehicle offered serious head injury died in nearly one of five new cars that the government tested in head-on crash tests to test results released Tuesday. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration results were based on 77 of all 1993 model design underwrote a 35-mile-per-hour crash into a barrier. Nearly dozen more 1993 model cars were tested in the coming weeks. The tests showed that a driver or front-seat passenger in the cars tested would have suffered life-threatening injuries as a result of the impact of a seat belt or other cars tested, the tests would have escaped with serious injuries, although of those cases the front seaters might have suffered severe injuries, the agency